

## **Public Works Committee of the Town of Amherst**

### **Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 7:00pm**

Pole Room, Bang Center

Meeting was called to order at 7pm with Steve Braun in the chair, Michael Cann, Don George, Christine Gray-Mullen, Guilford Mooring (Superintendent DPW), Charlie Moran.

#### **1. Administrative**

- a. Motion made, seconded and voted to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2010 meeting. Approved 5-0-0
- b. Next meetings scheduled for March 1, 2011 and April 5, 2011 at 7:00pm. Location to be determined.

#### **2. New Business:**

- a. Informal Public Hearing on Lincoln Ave Traffic Calming

Due to an error in the posting on the Amherst website, this public meeting on the Lincoln Ave. Traffic Calming is considered informal and residents may have the next chance to provide formal input at the next Public Works Committee (PWC) meeting. Residents can also submit comments to the DPW in a letter or by email at [publicworkds@amherstma.gov](mailto:publicworkds@amherstma.gov).

Steve Braun, chairman of the PWC, who resides on Lincoln Ave. relinquished his position for this portion of the meeting to PWC member Charlie Moran because of this conflict of interest.

Guilford Mooring (GM), Superintendent of DPW reiterated the current status of the Lincoln Ave. study:

- 1. Vehicle speeds are 30 MPH over the posted limit.
- 2. Vehicle volume is very high on Lincoln Ave. and Fearing Street
- 3. The use of speed cushions along Lincoln Ave. reduced the overall speed of vehicles on the street.
- 4. Placing partial closures on Lincoln Ave. and Sunset Ave. did not reduce vehicle volume or speed and proved problematic for many reasons.
- 5. The partial closures caused the neighborhood to be divided and placed a burden on the northern end of Lincoln.

Another experiment is being proposed to reduce traffic speed and volume in this neighborhood. This time the Town will install full closures between the neighborhood and UMass. The closures will be on Lincoln Ave. at North Hadley Road, on North Hadley Road adjacent to the UMass parking lot and possibly at Sunset and Mass Ave. This experiment will be installed this Spring

and will stay in place over the summer until November 2011. Data from this experiment will be tallied and analyzed.

Mr. Mooring mentioned that in addition to the Lincoln Avenue experiment, other traffic areas are being addressed that will assist with moving traffic to and from UMass. These include:

- Intersection of Rte 9 and University Drive
- Amity Street and University Drive
- Route 116 and Route 9 in Hadley
- University Drive and Massachusetts Ave on the UMass campus

Two other ongoing projects may help relieve some traffic issues: improving the traffic signal at the intersection of East Pleasant and Triangle Streets and UMass improving the aesthetics and safety of the underground Massachusetts Ave. tunnel.

Public comment period was opened.

Caren Rotello of Kendrick Place: Agreed last partial closure was terrible but that speed bumps did work. Against this new experiment. Puts additional traffic on other adjacent streets. A negative to many locals with inconvenience and wasted time. Enough “testing.” Learn from what has happened so far. Reminded that most of the write-in responses to the town were negative about closure. Mentioned that this meeting was hard to find and should have been better advertised.

Vince Rotello of Kendrick Place: Speed bumps worked to reduce speed but volume is still an issue. Against the closure of Lincoln Ave. Pushes drivers to lesser streets that aren’t built for extra traffic. Lincoln Ave. is a natural conduit from Rte. 9 to UMass campus. Questioned why this Lincoln Ave. issue is being treated like a town approved mandate.

Ruth Miller of Amherst: Agrees with both previous speakers. Reasons included that town is to maintain road but not change its use. It is a direct route to UMass which saves time, gasoline and produces less pollution than longer routes. Redirecting traffic could cause congestion in other areas of town. Public taxes pay for public roads and residents have a right to use them. Concerned about fire truck access. Most residents of Lincoln Ave. have moved there since the growth of UMass and increased traffic on Lincoln Ave. They knew where they were buying their home and what they were getting into. They can sell their home and move if they are unhappy with living on a through way. Illegal to gate a public road and have abutting residents use it as their own. Concerned this is Adverse Possession which could have legal ramifications for the town. She is in favor of four-way stops, speed bumps and UMass to evaluate the student parking situation. She also referred to the closure as creating a gated community which Mr. Mooring clarified that would not in fact be the case.

Ed Cutting of Lincoln Ave: Reprehensible to think of closing Lincoln Ave. He will have to drive four extra miles out of his way if this closure happens. Road rage will happen on other roads of Amherst with this closure and diverting traffic onto other roads. There needs to be access to UMass for commuters.

Britt Ruhe of Lincoln Ave.: A mother of four has safety concerns regarding the current situation of Lincoln Ave. Many inattentive drivers on phones and texting. She is in favor of barricades. Need greater safety especially with children waiting for buses and walking which should include more law enforcement. The half barriers were problematic with cars zipping around them.

Claudia O'Brien of Amherst: Speeding is much worse in other area of Amherst including in front of Munson Library but we wouldn't close those streets.

Chris Stevens of Lincoln Ave: Concerned with safety of Lincoln Ave. and agrees with B. Ruhe.

Anonymous Lincoln Ave resident: Concerned about the safety of Lincoln Ave. and states that commuting hours are dangerous especially trying to get in and out of driveway.

#### 4. Old Business:

##### a. Complete Streets proposal

presenters: Rob Crowner and Kevin Eddings

Continuing the pursuit of their "2011 supplemental transportation bond authorization request." that is "to place Amherst on the road towards its transportation goal of Complete Street (C.S.)". The proposal at the previous PWC meeting was that Amherst borrows \$1,196,000 to fund a nuanced, street-by-street program to bring Amherst's roadways closer to the ideal of the C.S. A C.S. is defined as where automobiles, bicycles, busses, and pedestrians can travel with safety and ease. Using the list of streets to be improved from the \$4.5million bond passed last year by the town for the 2011 and 2012 construction seasons, they estimated the additional costs required to make these roads "complete" and created a spreadsheet "Amherst Complete Streets Initiative". (See attached document)

Mr. Crowner and Mr. Eddings suggest using the upcoming third year of Chapter 90 funds for 2013 to fund half of the \$1million they estimate it will cost to make the 2011/2012 street improvements to include C.S. improvements. This would change the plan presented to the Town from a two year plan to a three year plan to cover the extra C.S. costs. Roads that were to be improved the third year (2013) would be pushed back and that money would instead be used to pay for the C.S. improvements. Ms. Gray-Mullen stated that the concept of C.S. is a good one but has concerns that these C.S. improvements could run higher than estimated, slow the completion of the DPW's list of roads to be improved in 2011/2012 and could result in a higher financial burden to the Town.

Mr. Crowner and Mr. Eddings also provided two suggested motions for the PWC to pass.(See attached). The PWC's recommendation would then move to the Amherst Select Board. Mr. Braun suggested that the committee look more closely at the C.S. concepts and what that would mean for actual construction and finances if Amherst commits to C.S. Mr. Crowner and Mr. Eddings stated the Amherst Master Plan has a goal like a C.S. policy but has not been officially accepted by the Town. S. Braun and C. Moran both expressed thoughts of wanting "to do the

right thing.” Mr. Braun suggested that the committee think over draft motions concerning Complete Streets for the next meeting.

Mr. Crowner and Mr. Eddings also suggested that committee members check out the Complete Streets website or the book Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices.

b. As requested by the Town Manager and DPW Superintendent, Guilford Mooring, the Committee continues to explore a range of strategies aimed at preserving more of the Chapter 90 funds for road maintenance and less on control of non-point-source pollution from stormwater. The committee needs to research and learn about ways to fund stormwater management (also referred to as Rain Tax) Ms. Gray-Mullen handed out copies of the Massachusetts Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Draft Presentation Handout dated November 17, 2010, to begin educating the Committee. website:

<http://www.mapc.org/sites/default/files/images/smartgrowth/environment/Stormwater-Funding-Resource-Guide.pdf>

## 2. Project Updates: Guilford Mooring

Atkins construction bidder has been chosen as the Ludlow based Baltazar Contractors Inc. and will proceed this Spring.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Gray-Mullen